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'ST. ANDREW' WAS LED INTO DIFFICULTIES BY A MAIDEN WHO
PRETENDED TO BE IN DISTRESS."

From St. Andrew of Scotland.

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

AND OTHER LEGENDS OF THE
SEVEN CHAMPIONS OF CHRISTENDOM



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*Publishers to Their Majesties the King & Queen
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ON THE ROAD



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SHIPS I HAVE MET

**ST. GEORGE AND THE
DRAGON**

STORIES FOR BOYS

STORIES FOR GIRLS

**TALES OF THE
AEROPLANES**

THE GOLDEN GOOSE

TOLD IN THE JUNGLE

**WINKY-WONKY BIRD
STORIES**

THE MEETING OF THE SEVEN CHAMPIONS

It happened one night, long, long years ago, that a son was born to the Lord High Steward of England, a Wonder-Child, bearing the image of a Dragon on his breast, a blood-red Cross upon his right hand, and a golden Garter round his left leg.

The night of his birth was one of fierce storm and terrible portents, and the trembling peasants whispered one to another, "The witches are abroad!" It was well, indeed, that none ventured into the forest at that midnight hour, for werewolves lurked in the shadows, eyes without heads glared from thickets, snakes, black and slimy, slithered on muddy tracks, and foul carrion birds flew overhead. Suddenly a trumpet sounded—the summons of the Arch-Enchantress Kalyb to assemble all evil things to her cave.

There she announced that great danger was threatening them through the birth of the Wonder-Child; "for," she said, "that blood-red Cross bodes us no good, and because of this sign on his body he cannot be slain by our magic."

After long discussion, a cunning plot was devised to steal away little St. George, the Wonder-Child, and

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so to pervert his mind that he would not know good from evil. "Then," said Kalyb, "trained to physical endurance and knightly exercise, but without chivalry or love of his fellows, he will become *our* champion and save us from our enemies."

Three days later the Lord High Steward returned to his castle at Coventry, after having been away upon a journey. Great was his consternation to hear sounds of lamentation within the walls, and the wailing women who came to meet him unfolded a tale of grief and terror.

"Alack!" said they, "a son has been born to you, a babe of rare and wondrous beauty, but bearing strange marks upon his little body—surely a child of destiny and great promise. We scarce had leisure to wonder and admire, ere suddenly the child disappeared from amidst the three nurses who guarded him, none knows how or when." With frantic haste messengers were dispatched to seek near and far; but never a trace of the missing child could be discovered. The Lord High Steward devoted the remaining years of his life to a fruitless search, till at length he died in a foreign land.

Meanwhile the stolen child grew up in the cave and woods of the Enchantress Kalyb, where he was treated with kindness and trained in many things it behoved a knight to know; but also he was taught much that was evil by his attendants. Thus years passed, and St. George became a stripling of great strength and exceeding beauty; beautiful in nature as well as in appearance;

for such was the potency of the Cross upon his hand, that his mind rejected all that was not good.

As he approached manhood the Enchantress (who, old as she was, ever appeared to him like a young and lovely damsel), fell in love with her pupil and wished to marry him.

St. George, however, realised and detested her wicked nature, and was ever occupied in planning some way of escape from the Enchanted Wood. Weary of his captivity, he decided that by trickery he must gain the longed-for freedom. He therefore made pretence of returning Kalyb's affection. "Most wise and learned Kalyb, Wonder of the World," he declared, "I am prepared to become your husband; but beg first that, as a token of your love, you grant me sole power over this wood and the cave and also disclose my birth and parentage."

"I fain would gratify your every wish," replied Kalyb; "therefore know that you are of royal lineage, son of Lord Albert, High Steward of England, long since dead."

She then led the young man within a brazen castle concealed in the depths of the forest. They descended to the dungeons, wherein were imprisoned six men of knightly mien.

"These prisoners," Kalyb explained, "are six of the bravest knights in the world, but now they are in our power. They are St. Denis of France, St. James of Spain, St. Anthony of Italy, St. Andrew of Scotland,

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St. Patrick of Ireland, St. David of Wales, Six Champions of Christendom, and you were born to be the seventh, St. George of England. But we shall avert your destiny, so that you may become King of Black Magic, and all the world will tremble at your name."

She then conducted St. George to a large stable where seven

magnificent horses were housed, and choosing the finest of them bestowed it upon him, saying, "Bayard is a steed of such force and invincible power that no knight in all the



world can conquer his rider; he is yours; the others belong to the Six Champions.

"Now," she continued, taking him to a room hung with the richest armour, "you shall be accoutred as becomes a knight," and with her own hands she attired him in richest caparison. "None can pierce that armour," said she; "and here is Ascalon, the mighty sword that will separate and cut the hardest flint and hew asunder the strongest steel; in its pommel lies a precious virtue that prevents treason, witchcraft or violence being proffered so long as you wear it. And now, beloved, my last and best gift of all, the silver wand, which opens every door and gate within the Enchanted Wood."

St. George, overwhelmed by all this kindness, began to regret the deception he was practising upon his benefactress, till the recollection of the prisoners in the castle flashed across his mind, and his heart hardened again.

Walking beside the Lady of the Woods, he absently struck at a rock with the silver wand, whereupon it opened and revealed to his horror-stricken eyes a cave filled with the corpses of tiny children.

"How comes this?" he cried; "I understand it not."

"Oh!" replied Kalyb carelessly, "'tis naught but a few babes that died by my witchcraft. If you would see a place of greater terror, follow me; I can show you your kingdom."

She stepped into the cave, and no sooner had she entered than St. George struck his wand upon the rock,

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which caused it to close so firmly that no crack was visible. The Enchantress, thus imprisoned, had no means of escape, and so she perished.

St. George lost no time in liberating the Six Champions, who gratefully elected him their head and leader; and after choosing such armour and weapons as suited their needs, they mounted their trusty steeds and in company left the Enchanted Wood for ever.

They made their way to Coventry, and St. George was fortunate in finding that the fine estate, which was his patrimony, had been kept in excellent order by the faithful steward in whose charge his father had left it.

The Champions abode together here, all excellent friends, and they instructed St. George in many matters of which he had been kept in ignorance by Kalyb. Chief of these were all that pertained to the teachings of Christianity and the true chivalry of knighthood, and never was there an apter pupil.

Each of this little band had his own particular strength, and their natures varied greatly; but the same spirit imbued them all—a desire to do honour to their Faith and country, to practise the true chivalry of knighthood, and right the wrong wheresoever they might find it.

When the spring sunshine warmed the earth and flowers jewelled bush and tree, the Champions fared forth to seek adventures. They travelled in company until they came to the junction of seven paths, when the knights took their separate ways and rode off in search of adventure.

ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

ST. GEORGE turned towards a port whence he could make his way to the Holy Land. After months of travel he reached the borders of Egypt as night was closing in. He descried a hut, towards which he hastened in the hope of finding shelter.

A hermit stood at the door seemingly consumed by grief, for he wrung his hands and lamented loudly. St. George craved hospitality, upon which the hermit replied: "Sir Knight, you are welcome to such shelter as I can offer; but I counsel you to turn and flee from this stricken land, where we scarce have hands enough to dispose of our dead."

"The more reason I should stay," answered St. George; "for my hands are willing, and I lack not heart to aid those who are in distress."

"Alas!" was the reply, "this land has been plagued for four and twenty years by a fierce Dragon that destroys the inhabitants. Each day a young maid must be sacrificed to satisfy its appetite, or the beast breathes forth a poison gas that spreads death and devastation everywhere. Each day we have offered one of our girl-children, till none is left save the King's only daughter, the beautiful Princess Sabra, and to-morrow she too must be taken to the valley where the Dragon has his lair."

"Surely," exclaimed St. George, "there is some man in the country brave enough to slay this monster."

The hermit shook his head, saying, "So many have tried, but none succeed, and the valley is strewn with their bones. The King has proclaimed that any knight who can slay the Dragon shall receive the Princess in marriage and become heir to the throne."

"Tomorrow," said St. George, "I will attack this monster, not for the sake of the reward, but from a desire to rid this country of so terrible a scourge."

Next day St. George entered the fatal valley. The path led to a field, in the centre of which stood a tree bearing the largest and most luscious-looking oranges. St. George was about to gather some fruit, when a sob fell upon his ears, and he saw a lady of surpassing beauty tied to a tree a short distance off. He approached her, begging permission to cut her bonds.

"I thank you for your courtesy, Sir Knight," said she, "but it boots not whether I be bound or free, for in a short while the Dragon will come and devour me; there is no escape; for I, the Princess Sabra, am the last maiden left in Egypt."

"Nay, Princess," responded St. George, "you must away from this spot as speedily as you may, and I will either slay the monster or die in the attempt."

He liberated the Princess, and the faithful Bayard bore them to the mouth of the valley, whence the lady made her way to her father's palace.

When St. George returned to the field he became

aware of a strange, evil odour, and a deadly faintness almost overcame him; but, being a man of iron will, he was able to pull himself together, and with a prayer on his lips turned to meet the bellowing Dragon that now came lumbering towards him. The monstrous beast was covered with scales hard and glittering like brass, smoke and flame issued from its nostrils, and the huge wings and



great flapping tail were composed of a substance which no steel could pierce.

St. George soothed Bayard, and the good horse dashed forward. The Dragon flapped its wings, and the draught well-nigh blew the knight from his saddle; but Bayard stood firm and St. George thrust at the monster with his spear. The weapon broke against the brassy scales, and the Dragon, quite unharmed, reared and smote with its fore-foot, throwing the horse and its rider to the ground. Though sorely bruised St. George leapt to his feet, and stepped nimbly backwards as the monster came towards him. That step brought him within the shadow of the orange tree that grew in the centre of the field. The Dragon stood still, and made no attempt to come nearer. The remembrance flashed through St. George's mind of certain enchanted trees, mentioned to him by Kalyb in his youth, that no monster or witch dare approach; this must be such a tree. When his strength had returned, fortifying himself by a prayer, he sprang upon Bayard and, riding towards his adversary, smote at the monster with all his strength. A stream of deadly venom poured from a wound in the Dragon's breast, and the fumes therefrom again almost overpowered the knight, but he succeeded in reaching the orange tree, where he lay breathless. A terrible thirst assailed him, and he snatched eagerly at an orange and bit into it. Oh! the virtue of that magic fruit! Its juice brought him new life. He squeezed some into Bayard's panting mouth, and the horse rose up and

commenced to prance. Rendered wary by experience, St. George now sought for some vulnerable part of the monster's body where he might endeavour to land a blow. The Dragon reared upon its hind legs and lifted its wings. Quick as lightning St. George lunged forward, and Ascalon was buried to the hilt under its left wing. With a terrific bellow the Dragon fell to earth dead. Then St. George sank upon his knees and rendered thanks to the Almighty God for his safe deliverance from this great peril. Next he severed the Dragon's head, fixed it upon the truncheon of his broken spear, and rode joyfully from the valley. As he neared the city where King Ptolemy held his court, he observed that every eminence and point of vantage was thronged with sightseers. What a mighty cheer rang out when they beheld the approaching rider with the trophy he bore upon his spear!

The welcome news soon spread to the palace, and a sumptuous chariot, escorted by a hundred noblemen, was sent to conduct the hero to the royal presence. The King received him with deep emotion, and placed a pair of golden spurs upon his feet, an honour conferred only upon the most valorous.

That night the great banqueting hall was thronged with lords and ladies assembled to do honour to the Champion. Never before had St. George beheld so fine a spectacle, but the grace and beauty of Princess Sabra filled his heart to the exclusion of all else. Ever and anon he could not fail to observe that the brown



eyes of the Princess regarded him with kindly favour. Another pair of dark eyes was also continuously gazing; they belonged to Almidor, King of the Moors, an ardent suitor for the hand of the Princess. Ptolemy looked with favour upon this rich and powerful monarch, but his daughter loathed the Moor and shuddered when he approached her.

When the repast was finished, St. George was conducted to a handsome apartment, where Ptolemy and his blushing daughter received him with great friendliness.

"Most Noble Knight, Champion of England," said the King, "you have fulfilled the conditions set out in the proclamation, and we are prepared to carry out our part of the contract if such be your desire."

"Great Monarch," replied St. George, "I claim no recompense for the service it was my duty to render to a lady in distress; but should the Princess deign to look upon me with favour, it would be more precious to me than the crown of mighty Egypt."

"Most nobly spoken, Sir Knight," approved the King, and Sabra extended her hand with a glance so tender and confiding that St. George could feel his suit half-won already.

Halcyon days followed for St. George and his sweet Sabra, till at length she placed her hand in his, and declared, "'Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.'"

Meanwhile Almidor the Moor spent busy hours plotting the downfall of his rival. On one occasion, when St. George rode out of the city to visit his friend the hermit, six of Almidor's knights hid themselves, two by two, in a wood, meaning to waylay and kill him. Fortunately, however, the crackling of a twig betrayed their presence to St. George, and setting upon each pair in turn, he laid them low.

Another day, the English Knight was heated by his

exertions in a tournament, and Almidor took the opportunity to offer him a cooling drink, into which he had secretly put some deadly poison. This time St. George was warned of his peril by a ring which Sabra had given him, and which contained a stone with the wonderful quality of turning dull and colourless when danger threatened its wearer. He therefore contrived to avoid drinking the liquid.

Thus foiled in his wicked attempts, Almidor set to work to poison the King's mind against the Christian champion. After a time he succeeded, and he and Ptolemy devised a plot by which they hoped to rid themselves of St. George. The King asked him to carry an important secret document to the Soldan of Persia, and he consented, not knowing that the sealed letter contained a request that the Soldan should at once put the bearer to death.

ST. GEORGE SLAYS THE GIANT

ST. GEORGE set off with a heavy heart, for each day's journey separated him further from his beloved Sabra.

When at last he sighted the Soldan of Persia's palace he found it to be a building of great splendour, with walls of white marble, windows of crystal, and lattices of wrought silver set with precious stones. In a square before the palace a great number of people was assembled, for it so happened that a celebration in honour of the

chief gods of Persia was in progress, and the people, inflamed by religious ardour, could ill brook the appearance of a knight bearing a Red Cross upon his shield. They turned upon him, shouting, "Down with the Christian dog! Stone him! Kill him!" and in a moment St. George was the centre of a hostile, threatening crowd. He laid about him right and left with the hilt of his sword, and the Persians fell like ninepins; but he was too greatly outnumbered, and ere long they led him in custody before the Soldan.

"Take him away and cut off his head," shouted the Soldan angrily; "we want no thieving Christians here." St. George demanded a fair hearing in the name of Ptolemy of Egypt, whose ambassador he was. He extended the letter sealed with the scarab of King Ptolemy, which the Soldan snatched from his hand. He perused it hastily, and then calling to his janissaries, bade them guard the prisoner well, "for he is by report of King Ptolemy," said the Soldan, "a great contemner of our gods, and it behoves us to fulfil the desire of the monarch who has sent him."

They stripped the champion of his armour, and for the first time since Kalyb had handed him these gifts, Bayard and Ascalon passed from his keeping. He was cast into a dark, cold and dreary dungeon beneath the palace. In a corner he found a tattered furry rug, which he thankfully wrapped about him. The hours passed by, and consumed by hunger and thirst, he almost longed for death. A sound in the distance puzzled

him; it came nearer, and he recognised the roaring of hungry lions. As the door of his cell slid back he knew what the manner of his end was intended to be.

Tearing the furry rug in half, he wrapped a strip round each of his arms and rushed towards the raging, roaring beasts. With the courage of desperation he thrust his arms down the open jaws of his attackers, and such was his strength that the lions were choked, and fell down dead. The guards ran in haste to inform the Soldan.

"Throw him into the cave below the guardhouse," cried the monarch, "anyway, he is secure enough down there."

Days stretched into months; dry bread and water were pushed at intervals through a grating in the iron gate that closed the mouth of the cave, but the sight of a human face or the sound of a human voice was not vouchsafed him. But for the Faith that sustained him he would have become a prey to despair; but at length it appeared as though his prayers had been answered. Noticing one day a great block of stone somewhat loosened from its fellows, he found that it had blocked the entrance to a subterranean passage wide enough to admit his body. When he had penetrated this for some distance the air blowing cool upon his face indicated an exit into the open.

Forcing his way through a thicket that masked the opening, he beheld the dark vault of heaven, all star bespangled. He gazed around and listened for the

sound of footsteps or voices; but all things were silent. As he stood doubting which way to turn, a whinny greeted his ears, the unmistakable call of Bayard. It had come from a stable close at hand, guarded by two grooms. St. George still retained some of his old strength and



power; so two of his well-directed blows stretched the sleepers unconscious on the ground. It took but a moment to locate Bayard's stall, where he found not only his trusty horse, but also the armour and sword of which he had been despoiled.

Armed and mounted as of yore, he rode boldly forward till he reached one of the palace gates, where a sentinel bade him halt.

"Open the gate, man, and let me away with all speed," shouted the knight; "a prisoner has escaped from the dungeons."

The Persian opened the gate, and away sped Bayard like the wind.

Before the purple dawn had won through the grey mantle of the night St. George was over the border and into the kingdom of Greece, safe from pursuit. He rode through a lonely country till at last he saw the towers of a castle, and determined to ask for food and shelter. He noted with amazement that a lady stood upon the wall in place of the usual watchman.

He greeted her courteously, and begged for food and drink; but instead, the lady advised him to depart with all speed.

"My husband is a cruel giant," said she, "and if once he perceives you, not all the gold of India or the wealth of Babylon can preserve your life."

"Now by the honour of my knighthood," replied St. George, "I must eat and drink or die."

Finding that nothing would avail to move him, the



lady sped softly within and returned with food and drink. He fell to hungrily, and had almost finished his repast when he was disturbed by the appearance of a monstrous giant brandishing an iron bar. St. George prepared to sell his life as dearly as possible.

The combat raged fiercely for many hours. At last the sweat poured down the giant's brow and almost blinded him, so that he was forced to raise his hand to wipe it away. The Champion, quick to take advantage, thrust upwards and caught his foe beneath the ribs, whereupon the huge creature fell and ended his worthless existence.

After offering up a prayer of thanksgiving, the knight entered the castle. The lady received him with expressions of gratitude, for her husband's wickedness and cruelty had brought great sorrow upon her. As they sat at table she expressed such kindly interest in the concerns of her guest that he was led to confide to her his anxiety in regard to Princess Sabra.

"I know her heart is true to mine," he said, "but Heaven alone can protect her from the wiles of that crafty villain Almidor the Moor."

"Your fears are well founded," replied the lady, "for a traveller in passing, some days since, told me he was on his way to Barbary to witness the wedding festivities of the king of that country, who was marrying a princess he had brought from Egypt."

St. George would have departed there and then; but the lady persuaded him to wait until the next day, as both he and his horse were weary.

On the morrow he departed, and travelled far and fast, through Greece into Tartary. Here he happened upon a garden curiously fenced by thorns and withered briars. A moss-grown column of stone attracted his

attention, for from a crevice in it the finely jewelled hilt of a sword protruded. When St. George dismounted to examine this curiosity at closer quarters, he perceived the following verse engraved on the pommel in letters of gold:

"My magic spells remain most firmly bound,
The world's strange wonder, unknown by anyone,
Till that a Knight within the North be found,
To pull the Sword from out this Rock of Stone;
Then ends my charms, my Magic Arts and all,
By whose strong hand wise Ormondine must fall."

St. George put his hand upon the hilt and gave it a hefty pull. To his surprise the sword drew out as easily as though it had been hung by a thread of untwisted silk. He was still examining his treasure when a dishevelled, grey-bearded old man appeared. He kissed the knight's hand and bade him welcome, then conducted his guest through the garden to a cave guarded by four lovely girls. St. George looked into the cave and beheld the recumbent figure of a knight wrapped in a sheet of golden tissue.

"Renowned Sir," said the old man, "you see before you another Christian knight of your Northern land, and he too made bold effort to withdraw the enchanted sword from its bed of stone; but he was not the chosen one of destiny, so my magic spells prevailed and forced him to this slumber. Here he has awaited the hour of deliverance.

"St. George of England," continued the speaker, "yours is the hand that must strike me down; but ere I bare my breast to receive that fatal blow, you will hear the story of my misspent life.

"Once, long ago, I was a powerful monarch, but my avarice knew no bounds, and I made a surprise attack upon a peaceful neighbouring State; but they, proving stronger than I had expected, invaded and sacked my capital. Ere long I was hounded from the kingdom by my subjects, who were weary of my exactions. I fell in with an Enchantress named Kalyb, to whom I sold myself in return for power to bring destruction on my enemies. The name of Ormondine the Necromancer, as they called me, became feared and detested far and wide. When Kalyb died her power over me ceased and since then, for long years, I have done penance for my sins and prayed for pardon. At length in a vision I beheld a Christian knight whose coming would end my sorrows. Now, therefore, I pray you, take up the sword and drive it straight and true into my heart."

With a word of kind farewell and an earnest prayer for the repose of the Necromancer's soul, St. George did his bidding, and Ormondine's career of sin and repentance was ended.

As the body fell lifeless to the ground, there was a clashing of thunder, and St. George almost lost consciousness. When he opened his eyes again, Ormondine and the Enchanted Garden had vanished, and he stood on a dreary plain with the Magic Sword in his

hand. At his feet lay the slumbering knight, who at that moment, sitting up, looked about him. St. George gave a shout of joy, for he had recognised the well-known features of his friend and brother-at-arms St. David of Wales.

After many expressions of wonder and pleasure at this unexpected meeting, St. David related, as set out in the next chapter, his adventures from the time of their parting.

ST. DAVID OF WALES

AFTER bidding farewell to his companions at the junction of the seven paths, St. David passed through many countries till he came to Tartary. He reached the capital at a happy hour, for the Emperor was about to celebrate his birthday by holding a tournament. He had a friendly welcome at the palace, and in a short time his courtly bearing and pleasant countenance had won him the esteem of all.

The great day was ushered in by brilliant sunshine. All eyes were upon the dashing figure of St. David as he rode into the lists; but his opponent, Count Palatine, the Emperor's only son, was the hero of the occasion. He had won fame, far and wide, by his skill at jousting and tilting.

At the appointed moment the two knights charged with great vigour; but they were well matched and withstood the shocks or parried them adroitly. In

the second attack St. David was constrained to bend back almost to his saddle, and the heralds, thinking he was unhorsed, sounded a fanfare to announce the victory of Count Palatine. St. David, however, straightened himself, and made a dash at his rival, who, unprepared for this sudden onslaught, did not avoid it with sufficient celerity, so that horse and rider were overthrown by a crashing blow. By great misfortune the horse rolled over upon his master, crushing him so terribly that the attendants saw that he had not many minutes to live.

"It was a fair and well-fought combat, so do not hold St. David to blame for the accident," muttered the dying man; but the half-demented father turned upon the Champion of Wales and was like to rend him in pieces.

"Let him be executed forthwith," cried he; "cut off the hand that has laid low the Pride of Tartary."

Though stricken by grief and remorse, St. David felt keenly the injustice of these reproaches.

"If my right hand could have saved that precious life," he said, "right gladly would I offer it; but, mighty Emperor, if die I must, let my end be worthy of the honour of a knight and not at the hands of an executioner."

The Emperor bade the petitioner withdraw from his presence, saying that he would consider his punishment at some later time. When the funeral obsequies had terminated, he summoned St. David, and thus addressed him:

"Sir Knight, you came here as a stranger and were received with favour, in return for which you have plunged the Empire into mourning and embittered my old age; but your act was unintentional, so though I impose a harsh penance upon you, 'tis one that will not soil your knightly honour. You must travel to the confines of my territory, and seek the Enchanted Garden of Ormondine the Necromancer. There, beside the garden gate, stands a pillar of stone, in which a magic sword is embedded to its hilt. I have long been ambitious to possess this sword, and many bold and venturesome knights have sought to obtain it for me; but none succeed, and few return. Should you achieve this adventure and bring me the sword, you shall receive pardon and reward. If you fail, you must give me your parole to end your life forthwith."

St. David bound himself by his oath of knightly honour to bring back the Enchanted Sword or die. He set out without delay, and overcoming many hardships and dangers, approached the Enchanted Garden and beheld the pillar in which was enclosed the Enchanted Sword. "By some lucky chance I may be the destined Knight from the North and secure the prize," he reflected; and without hesitation he seized the hilt and pulled with all his strength; but the sword remained as firm as before; and though he tried again and again, he was forced to admit that his efforts were fruitless. "And thus," thought he, "ends my adventure and my life." Suddenly his senses were overtaken by a heavy



sleep, and he knew no more until he awoke in the friendly embrace of St. George of England. After their adventures had been narrated, St. George handed over the Enchanted Sword to St. David, and they parted.

St. David returned to Tartary and presented the Enchanted Sword to the Emperor, who accorded him

a full pardon, and completely restored him to the royal favour. St. David became the hero of courtiers and people, but, caring little for such fame, he began, without fear of consequences, to preach his Faith with untiring zeal and so much conviction, that most of those "who came to scoff, remained to pray," and the Emperor himself accepted Christianity.

After a time St. David was lured to depart for Greece by a proclamation that invited Christian knights of every land to assemble in Athens for the greatest tournament the world had ever seen. The Emperor loaded him with gifts, and permitted him to depart with his blessing.

THE RESCUE OF PRINCESS SABRA

UPON leaving St. David, St. George pressed on, resolved at all hazards to effect the rescue of Princess Sabra. After unremitting travel he arrived within sight of a large city, on the outskirts of which he came upon a hermitage, and spied an ancient Father sunning himself in the porch.

St. George bade him good day, and enquired the name of the gleaming white-towered city before them.

"That is Tripoli, Most Noble Christian Knight, where Almidor the black King of Morocco now holds his Court," replied the hermit.

At these words St. George started.

"Has the King but lately celebrated his marriage?" he questioned in a trembling voice.

"Nay, it has not yet taken place," replied the old man; "it is whispered that the Princess Sabra is an unwilling bride, who puts off the ceremony from day to day, and that Almidor will wed her willy'nilly three days hence."

"I would give all I possess," exclaimed St. George, "for the chance of a word with the lady, for she was betrothed to me, Reverend Father. Yet I dare not enter the city, for once in the hands of Almidor, my life would not be worth a moment's purchase. Perchance you could help me."

The old man set himself to devise some means whereby St. George could pass within the gates in safety.

"Each day at noon the Princess Sabra distributes alms to a hundred poor palmers at the palace gate. Always she asks the recipients of her dole to pray for the welfare of St. George of England," said he. "I could lend you a palmer's gown, and thus disguised you might find opportunity to get a word with her."

St. George thanked him, and leaving Bayard and Ascalon in his charge, disguised himself in the palmer's habit.

He mingled with the procession of poor palmers as they made their way to the palace gate to receive Princess Sabra's benevolence. With his hood drawn well over his face, he knelt in the midst of the crowd, as she appeared, carrying her alms for distribution, followed by a number of slaves who acted as guards.

As the Princess came towards him he could see how troubled and sorrowful she looked.



She passed from one palmer to another, begging them in her gentle voice to pray for St. George of England, till at length she stood before her betrothed. He held out his bowl with a hand that trembled so that it

caught her attention. With a dexterous twist of his wrist St. George displayed the flashing diamond ring which had never left his finger since Sabra had placed it there.

The Princess turned pale as death; but she recovered herself quickly, knowing there were many watchful eyes upon her.

"It is I, St. George," he whispered. "Where can I speak with you alone?" She hesitated, and in her agitation could form no plan.

"Look the other way, you are observed," he said softly; "to-morrow will find me here again; arrange what you can; till then, farewell."

Next day found him again amongst the palmers at the palace gate, but Sabra passed him by without a word or look as she dropped his alms into the bowl. He gazed after her in amazement; had she grown weary of his love and now preferred Almidor? He went sorrowfully on his way, but beyond the city walls, finding himself free from observation, he raised his bowl, and observed a note, folded small, amongst the coins at the bottom. He tore it open and devoured the lines with greedy eyes.

"Be outside the west gate at midnight," they ran; "a trusty slave will conduct me there to meet you.—Sabra."

Long ere midnight St. George's impatience drove him to bid the ancient Father farewell, and after bestowing a bountiful largesse upon him, he betook himself to the trysting place. Every minute seemed an hour till he heard stealthy footsteps, and a veiled figure stood beside him.

"Is that you, Sabra, my beloved?" he whispered; and she replied, "It is I, St. George, my own true knight." Without another word he put his arms about her and swung her before him on to the saddle. Bayard set off across country at a speed no other horse could match, nor till morning did St. George draw rein. Bayard had by that time carried them well away from Barbary, and Almidor the Moor was powerless to do them harm. Seated side by side at the humble table of a shepherd's hut, Sabra related how the



perfidious Moor had stolen her from Egypt and brought her captive to Tripoli.

Though Almidor had treated her kindly, he insisted upon her becoming his bride. On one pretext or another she had postponed the fatal day, hoping for succour.

"My last hope forsook me when news came that my father had died from grief at my loss, and I was in the depths of despair when you appeared and delivered me for the second time," said Princess Sabra. Then she added, with tears streaming down her cheeks, "I have but you now in all the world, and I will go with you wherever you desire."

"Most dear and gracious lady," replied St. George, "our voyage will be but to Athens for the present, where we can enjoy the wedding festivities of the King and his Amazonian Queen, and at the same time celebrate our own nuptials."

The journey to Greece was consummated without mishap, and Princess Sabra and her betrothed arrived happily in Athens.

ST. DENIS OF FRANCE

PRINCESS EGLANTINE, the beautiful only child of the King of Thessaly, was much indulged by her father, and admired and flattered by everybody. As a consequence her natural good qualities were soon overlaid by pride and selfishness, and the courtiers began to

she speak of her as Proud Eglantine. Fortunately for her she had a fairy godmother, who was not blind to the faults of her favourite. She tried by gentle means to lead the Princess into better ways; but these proving fruitless, she determined to give a much-needed lesson at any cost before it was too late. On Eglantine's sixteenth birthday the young lady was treated to a lecture on the virtue of humility and charity towards others less fortunate than herself.

Eglantine tossed her pretty head, and thought, "Dear me! how old-fashioned fairies are getting in their ideas!"

Her godmother guessed what was in her mind, and said, "My dear, if you will not learn what is taught in kindness, you will be sent to a harder school"; and without a word of farewell she departed.

It was a broiling hot day, and Eglantine decided to have her dinner in the pinewood. It was cool and pleasant there, but this did not serve to restore Eglantine's good humour; indeed, nothing pleased her. Presently two little Nubian boys arrived with a hamper of good things for her meal.

"What do you mean by serving me on silver plates? You know I like the gold ones; and well! I declare you have brought me a roasted chicken and venison pasties; take them away, I hate the horrid things," she scolded. Seizing the chicken, she threw it at one of the grinning little black boys, who collected the repast hastily, assisted by his companion, and they made off towards the palace.

"Stop them! stop them!" cried the Princess, but they were already out of hearing, so she sent her servant after the runaways, for she had, after all, no mind to forgo her meal. At that very moment an old woman popped out from amongst the trees and commenced at once to beg.

"Go away," replied Eglantine, disgusted with the rags and dirt of the mendicant; "you have no right to come here."

"I am very hungry; at least give me the food you despise," whined the beggar, pouncing upon the chicken that still lay on the ground.

"Put it down; how dare you take such liberties!" cried the other, white with rage.

"Have you no compassion for age or poverty?" questioned the beggar; "then you must be taught by your own sufferings to feel for others." But in such a different voice did she speak, that the Princess looked at her quite startled. The beggar's mantle had fallen off, and with it the rags that disguised her godmother. She waved her wand, and the Princess felt herself lifted by invisible hands and carried far away to a deep wood she had never seen before. There she found, to her horror, that she was rooted to the spot where she stood, while her beautiful slim body was changing, changing, till it seemed like the trunk of a tree. She waved her arms in terror and found them to be leafy branches; Princess Eglantine had disappeared, and in her place stood a beautiful mulberry tree.

Under the spreading branches the fairy godmother sat. "My own little godchild," said she in her silvery voice, "when, by true repentance, you have purged your heart of pride and selfishness, there is yet much happiness in store for you. Farewell, my child, I chastise you for your own good." With these words she left her godchild to the solitude of the gloomy wood.

When Eglantine's disappearance became known at the palace a frantic search was made far and wide; but never a trace of her could they discover. The godmother, too, was not to be found. Although invisible, the fairy was not far off; indeed she was kept busy guarding her precious mulberry tree.

One sunny day as the fairy sat lost in thought she heard the sound of a horse's hoofs, and as handsome a knight as she had ever beheld approached.

"By all that is lucky," said she to herself, "'tis a Christian knight, for he has a cross upon his shield; he will answer my purpose most excellently."

The knight was none other than St. Denis of France, who had been through many adventures since parting with his brother knights, and was now entering Thessaly. The fairy, with a wave of her wand, raised a cloud that obscured the sun, and St. Denis became so confused that he could not tell in which direction he was going. He wandered hither and thither, but found himself returning constantly to the same point, a particularly fine mulberry tree. When he encountered it for the



fourth time he was pleased to discover some ripe and luscious berries upon it. He plucked a handful and ate them; no sooner had he swallowed the last one than he felt so giddy

that he was obliged to dismount from his horse. His body seemed strangely light, and he had an unaccountable inclination to walk upon all fours, in which ridiculous position he galloped along at an

extraordinary pace. Finding himself beside a pond, he bent over the edge to quench his thirst. The crystal, clear water reflected a large stag with branching antlers; as he moved, the reflected stag also moved. Completely mystified, he sought to clear his vision by rubbing his eyes; but, horror of horrors! his hands had turned to hooves at the end of slender hairy limbs. At last he realised the cruel truth, that he had been changed into the animal whose reflection confronted him in the pond.

For long and many days St. Denis wandered in misery through the woods, ever followed by his horse, who seemed to understand his master's plight and did his utmost to show his sympathy. Ever and anon he returned to the mulberry tree, which seemed to exercise some strange fascination upon him. Under the spreading branches he found shelter from the burning sun, or beating rain, or wintry blasts. By the time spring again bedecked the earth with its flowery quilt it seemed to him as though the branches stretched tenderly towards him. One evening he was startled to hear a hollow voice issue from within the trunk, and he distinguished the following words:—

“ Cease to lament, thou famous man of France,
With gentle ears come listen to my moan;
In former time it was my fatal chance
To be the proudest maid that e'er was known;
By birth I was the daughter of a king,
Though now a breathless tree, and senseless thing.

"Yet seven months in shape of hart thou must remain,
And then the purple rose, by fate's decree,
Shall bring thee to thy former shape again,
And end at last the woful misery:
When this is done, be sure you cut in twain
This fatal tree wherein I do remain."

The allotted seven months passed slowly by, and St. Denis hunted for the purple rose; but never a trace of this rare flower could he see. At length, in the course of his ramblings, he climbed a hill he had not observed before, his horse, as usual, following him closely. At the summit he stood gazing over the landscape for a few moments, and in that short space of time his faithful horse had disappeared.

"Alack!" moaned St. Denis, "that I should be deserted by so true a friend!" His misery was, however, quickly banished by the return of his trusty companion, and entangled in his long flowing mane was a spray of roses with soft petals of purest purple. With feelings of deep gratitude St. Denis nibbled the scented blossoms, and then fell to the ground in a deep and dreamless slumber. It was as a horned beast he went to sleep; he awoke to find himself, once more, a man. Falling upon his knees, he gave thanks for his restoration, and then embraced the horse who had proved so worthy in his hour of need. The next duty was to carry out the behest of the voice to destroy the mulberry tree. Once more he stood before it, and his eyes filled with tears; it went to his heart to spoil the "Queen of the Woods," as he called it to himself.

"Destroy and spare not," cried the hollow voice from within the trunk; and at these words St. Denis drew his sword, and with a blow he sundered the roots.

A great
forth;
hollow
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girl
stepped
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St. Denis
fell
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knee
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her.

flame flashed
then from the
trunk a fair



"Arise, Sir Knight," said Eglantine, "to you I owe my thanks for the recovery of my human shape, after a long but well-deserved punishment for sins and follies of which I now am thoroughly ashamed."

Seated by his side on the severed roots, Princess

Eglantine related the story of her vain and selfish girlhood, and how she had been wisely punished by her fairy godmother. When the narrative was finished, St. Denis begged the Princess to become his wife. He confessed his love and admiration for her, which was no sudden thing, but had been growing, though he knew it not, through all those weary months. Eglantine blushing laid her hand in his, and owned that she too had grown to love the sad-eyed stag. "But," exclaimed she, "I know not what my father will say."

"That will be arranged," cried a silvery voice, and the fairy godmother appeared, promising the young couple every blessing. She led them back to the palace, the happiest couple in all the land. As man and wife they spent their days in doing deeds of kindness and mercy, and spread the word of the Gospel amongst the people.

We shall meet them again at the great tourney held in Athens in celebration of the marriage of the King of Greece to the Queen of the Amazons.

ST. JAMES OF SPAIN

ST. JAMES sailed eastward, thinking to make his way to Jerusalem; but his ship was wrecked during a terrific storm, and all the crew perished; St. James and his horse were cast ashore upon the margin of a desert, where, stretching from horizon to horizon, he could see naught but hot yellow sand. After travelling southwards

for several hours he reached a great forest, in which he wandered for many troubled days and nights.

Numerous were the dangers he had to overcome before he reached the edge of the forest and saw the domes and towers of a city. Entering the main gate boldly, he passed unquestioned into a street of noble dwellings and fine temples. Throngs of people were assembled in this thoroughfare, and were evidently in expectation of some great event. Soon down the street came a great procession. First a troop of well-appointed horse; then twelve armed knights, mounted on warlike coursers. After them came a magnificent chariot drawn by six coal-black steeds, in which the King was seated; and this was followed by his guards. Amidst another guard rode the King's daughter, while at the back of the train came knights and esquires and followers of humbler degree, all equipped for hunting.

"Yes, that is our King, Nebuzaradan, and his daughter the beautiful Princess Celestine," said one of the onlookers in reply to a question from St. James. Upon a further query, he elicited the information that they had of late been troubled by the depredations of wild beasts. In order to lessen their numbers the King had arranged a great hunt, which was now on the point of setting out for the forest. Further, the King had offered a magnificent corslet of steel to whosoever should slay the first wild beast that day.

The adventurous spirit of St. James was stirred to compete for this fine prize; not for the sake of its value,

but to do honour to his name and country. Riding like the wind, he reached the recesses of the great wood well in advance of the royal party. He followed the tracks left by some heavy animal in the boggy ground, and came presently to the lair of a huge boar.

The beast was size, and terrible its head was

of extraordinary to behold; for deformed, with eyes sparkling like a fiery

furnace
and
tusks
sharper
than
iron
pikes.
It had
bristles
resembling
steel
wire,
and a
horrid
tail,
curling
and
twisting



like a wreath of snakes. All about, scattered human bones and skulls too well showed that it had preyed upon the inhabitants of the city and dragged them to its den.

St. James blew a blast on his silver horn; this aroused the boar, who reared himself and fiercely assailed the Champion. The knight sprang nimbly from his horse and struck a violent blow with his spear, which glanced off that bristly coat, broken into useless pieces. Hastily drawing his sword, St. James charged again, but without result, for the hide was as hard as a stony rock. The beast rushed at the hunter with flaming eyes, but the knight leapt aside, and the boar crashed against a tree with such terrific force that it fell to the ground stunned. St. James seized his opportunity and had chopped off its horrid head with his battle-axe before the creature could recover itself. He now lost not a moment in seeking for the royal hunting party. Nebuzaradan was graciously pleased to receive the boar's head, and rewarded the stranger with the promised corslet; but no sooner did he hear that he was a Spaniard and a Christian Champion, than his fury knew no bounds.

"Do you not know, bold sir," he cried, "that the law of this land forbids the harbourage of unbelievers in our gods? You are a Christian, and therefore a hater of those we worship; so you must die; yet, since you have proved your bravery, I grant you one privilege—you may yourself select the manner of your death." The Spanish knight claimed one hour's respite in which to make his supplications to his Creator. Upon the hour

expiring he desired to be tied to a tree, and shot through the heart by a young maiden of noble birth.

He was soon stripped of his armour and bound firmly to a pine tree, but of all the young noblewomen present, not one could be found with the least inclination to slay so brave and handsome a knight. The King therefore

commanded
lots to be cast
amongst these
ladies, and she
to whom fell a
given number
was the chosen
one to shoot
the arrow. By
chance
this num-
ber was



drawn by Princess Celestine, whose very soul recoiled from doing so foul a deed.

She approached her father with tears raining down her cheeks, and so eloquently did she plead the cause of the Christian Champion that the King was at length prevailed upon to remit the death sentence and substitute the milder one of banishment from the country.

Celestine returned to St. James, who stood, with closed eyes, awaiting his last moment in quiet resignation. Presently he became aware of gentle fingers tremblingly unloosening his bonds, and opening his eyes, beheld the sweet face of the Princess close to his own.

"Most noble Knight," she whispered, "I have gained your life and liberty; will you in return pray for one who has long been a Christian in secret? I beg you accept this token, and wear it for my sake."

So saying, she slipped a ring off her finger and handed it to St. James, who bent down and kissed her hand in deepest gratitude.

Celestine turned away and departed with her father and the rest of the train, leaving the Champion's heart full of love for his beautiful deliverer.

The night was spent in aimless wandering, for he could not make up his mind to leave the Princess. At last he determined to return to the city and again see Celestine, regardless of the risks he would incur.

He dyed his skin with some black berries, and managed considerably to alter his appearance. Then he entered the city; but fearing that his manner of speech



might lead to discovery, he pretended to be dumb. When he had declared by signs his desire to enter the palace he was led before Nebuzaradan, who immediately accepted the tall, handsome Indian, for such he took him to be, as one of his guards. This position frequently gave him the opportunity of seeing Princess Celestine, and even of rendering her some small service. The Princess in her turn became much attached to the dumb Indian.

At this time the King of Arabia and the Admiral

of Babylon arrived at the Court as suitors for the hand of Celestine; but they found little favour in her sight, for the thoughts of the Princess were ever with the Spanish knight. Nebuzaradan, however, insisted upon Celestine selecting one of these powerful suitors without

delay. She absolutely refused to comply with a command given without consideration for her welfare, whereupon her father threatened to throw her into one of the rat-infested dungeons beneath the palace, and it was with difficulty that



she obtained his consent for twenty-four hours' grace in which to ponder over the matter.

† Celestine knew that he would have no hesitation in making her suffer cruelly to gain his own ends. She knew not where to turn for aid, till suddenly she bethought herself of the dumb Indian guard, and seeking him out privately poured forth her troubles to his sympathetic ears. Whereupon he drew out the ring she had given him, and disclosed himself as the Spanish Champion. It required but little persuasion to gain her acceptance of St. James as her future husband, and they decided to fly together, for so only could they avoid the risk of a speedy and terrible death through the wrath of Nebuzaradan.

So soon as night fell they stole softly and silently from the city and escaped to the open country. St. James shod his horse backwards, so that the pursuers might be led in a contrary direction. By this means they reached the coast safely and embarked for Spain, where they were married, and lived in peace and content until, when the great tourney at Athens was proclaimed, St. James decided to journey thither with his lady, as he had hopes of a reunion there with his brother Champions.

ST. ANTHONY OF ITALY

ST. ANTHONY of Italy rode gaily into Thrace. His high spirits were somewhat damped, however, when he passed through the gates of a city and was greeted by the solemn

sound of tolling bells. The palace and many of the houses were draped with heavy black, and most of the populace wore garments of the same hue. Upon inquiring the cause of these tokens of general mourning, a porter informed him that their grief was caused by the loss of the King's seven beloved daughters, who had disappeared mysteriously several months before.

"It happened whilst the King was out hunting," said the porter; "he liked the Princesses to accompany him wherever he went. This day they remained together at the edge of the wood, awaiting the return of His Majesty and his gentlemen, who had followed a stag along a road too rough and dangerous for them to attempt. Suddenly a terrible thunderstorm came up, and it is thought that the Princesses must have sought shelter in a castle not far off, without knowing that it was the abode of Blanderion, a fierce, cruel giant. From that time to this, naught has been heard of them. Many knights and bold adventurers have hazarded their lives in the endeavour to discover what has befallen our Princesses, but not one has ever returned."

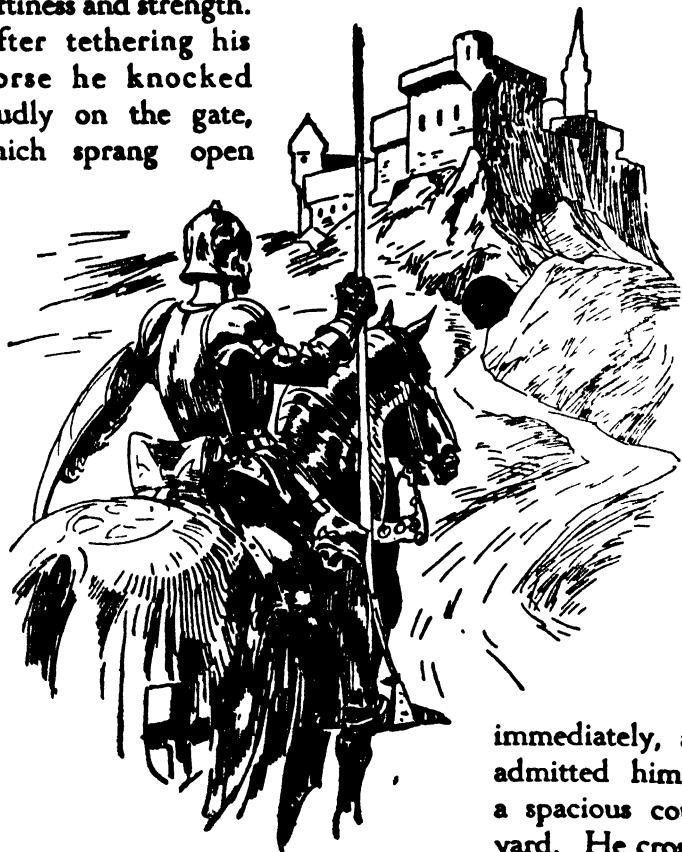
"I will go and try a fall with Sir Giant," said St. Anthony.

"Be advised by me, valorous Knight!" warned the porter, "and do not offer yourself as a meal for that voracious monster."

He conducted him, however, to the palace, and the grief-distracted monarch thankfully availed himself of his proffered service, promising that, in the event of his proving successful in his enterprise, he was prepared to

accept St. Anthony as a son-in-law. Without delay St. Anthony rode to the castle, which was of extraordinary loftiness and strength.

After tethering his horse he knocked loudly on the gate, which sprang open



immediately, and admitted him to a spacious courtyard. He crossed

to the door of the castle, and was about to enter, when he became aware of a pair of the largest green eyes he had ever seen, watching his every movement.

Not only were these eyes as large as saucers, but they had, apparently, neither head nor body belonging to them. Heavy footsteps approached, and he heard a stertorous breathing close to him, but naught was visible save those unblinking eyes. With a prayer for aid the Champion lunged forward and drove his sword with all his might into the place where he reckoned the body would be. A chuckle sounding like the rumble of thunder seemed the sole result, save that the well-tempered blade snapped in pieces.

St. Anthony drew out his dagger; but he was clutched by the waist and lifted from the ground, and a thin, squeaky voice far above his head called out:

"Ha! a real good mouthful this time, not a bag of bones like the last whipper-snapper that came this way; but shellfish is bad for my digestion, so off with his armour, ha! ha!"

Meanwhile St. Anthony was raised higher still, and clumsy fingers appeared to be fumbling with his buckles. By the rhythmic beating as of some gigantic sledgehammer the Champion judged himself to be on a level with the monster's heart, and with a sudden desperate movement he drove his dagger in that direction. It was undoubtedly his lucky hour, for the dagger pierced straight and true between the ribs, the only spot that might be pierced in the giant's body. Blanderon fell to the ground mortally wounded, letting the Champion drop with a thud. It was a big fall, and St. Anthony lay to all appearance as dead as the giant, who in expiring

had become visible, and was stretched an inert mass along the courtyard.

Presently Princess Rosalinde, the eldest daughter of the King of Thrace, peeped in and, espying the giant's body, hastened to assure herself that he was really dead.

She then observed St. Anthony, and ran to his side with all speed. Loosening his armour she found his heart still beating, although but faintly. She chafed the limp limbs and endeavoured to restore the circulation of his life-blood; at first her efforts seemed in vain, but finally St. Anthony regained consciousness, and was soon sufficiently recovered to thank the lady for her kind offices. In feeble tones he revealed the story of his victory over Blanderion; but Rosalinde begged him to exert himself no further, and assisting him into the castle, she lodged him comfortably. In a couple of days he was able to rise and accompany the Princess over the castle. During his hours of weakness he had been an attentive listener to the sad little tale the lady told him, of how she and her sisters had hastily sought shelter when the storm came up on the eventful day of the hunt.

"We were swept off our ponies by a mighty arm that carried us here," said Rosalinde, "and we were hopelessly and helplessly in the giant's power. He examined us carefully, and concluded we were too small and thin to be worth eating. 'You are the best of the bunch,' he said to me, 'and can remain in the castle to wait upon me. I have a difficulty in retaining servants here, as I can't resist eating them when they



get nice and fat, so you know what to expect if you don't work hard enough to keep thin.' Then he turned to my poor little sisters, waved his awful hand, and all six of them were transformed into swans. I have been maid-of-all-work in this horrible place, with never a hope of escape. Many brave men ventured here, but Blanderon had the power of making himself invisible, and none, save you, most valiant Sir, knew how to attack him. He devoured his victims, and hung their armour in a great hall as trophies.

In the castle garden St. Anthony saw a broad pond of clear silvery water, and upon it swam six snow-white swans with crowns of gold upon their heads.

"Those are my sisters," said Rosalinde, bursting into bitter tears. The knight comforted her tenderly and advised her to return with him to her father's palace.

"Perchance your father's counsellors will discover some means of restoring your sisters to their proper shapes, and, be that as it may, we do not know how to aid them, so it is best to go," he said.

With a fond farewell to the beautiful birds, St. Anthony and Rosalinde mounted the knight's horse and soon reached the city. The King was overcome with joy as he embraced his long-lost child and poured out his gratitude to her deliverer; but when Rosalinde revealed the sad fate of her sisters, the good old King was once more full of woe.

He summoned the wisest men in the kingdom and held counsel with them, and it was decided to hold a great and solemn assembly at Blanderon's castle and invoke the gods for thirty days and thirty nights.

Whilst the preparations for this event were in progress St. Anthony and Princess Rosalinde sought the King's consent to their immediate marriage. The monarch arranged for the ceremonial to take place before he set out with a great cortège of priests and courtiers for the gloomy castle. St. Anthony and his bride then departed for Athens, to be present at the great tourney, which had long been advertised in that city.

ST. ANDREW OF SCOTLAND

AT the command of the King of Thrace an altar was erected beside the crystalline waters of the pond whereon the six snow-white swans with golden crowns were gracefully swimming. Unceasingly, from dawn to dusk and from dusk to dawn, black-robed priests and sable-clad mourners presented oblations and sacrifices to the false gods whom they worshipped. They thought thereby to appease the angry deities and recover the unhappy Princesses who had been so cruelly transformed by Blanderon. For the appointed thirty days and nights they continued their heathenish rites, and still the snow-white swans remained unchanged upon the pond. The King was cast down to the lowest depths of despair by the non-success of these efforts, and tears rolled down his cheeks as he bade them cease from further exertions and prepare to return to the palace.

At this moment the company was startled by the blare of a trumpet at the outer gate, and upon this being thrown open a knight in silver mail, with a cross set in blue silk upon his breast, rode into the courtyard. He begged to be brought before the King, and was conducted into the garden where the solemn service was just concluded.

The new-comer sank upon his knee before the monarch, and expressed his sorrow at the tragic misfortune that

had happened to the six Princesses at the hands of the giant.

"Gracious Governor of Thrace," he said, "be it known to you that I am St. Andrew, by birth a Knight of Scotland and a Champion of Christendom. Whilst travelling in this neighbourhood I heard by chance of the trouble that has come upon you so undeservedly, and I felt impelled to come hither and plead with you to have recourse to sincere and humble prayer to the only true God for the recovery of your children. Forswear your false gods, and abandon the vain ceremonies and beliefs that have helped you not at all!"

"I do not doubt the kindness of your intention, Sir Knight," replied the King civilly, "but I lack proof that the God you worship is more potent and merciful than the deities who have presided over Thrace since times immemorial."

"In honour to Christendom, and to prove my words, I challenge six of your proudest and strongest knights, against whom I will maintain in single combat that our God is the one true and only God," cried St. Andrew, casting down his steel gauntlet.

This unexpected challenge somewhat disconcerted the Thracians; but after consultation amongst themselves they selected six knights, who proceeded to accept the gage of St. Andrew. The meeting was then appointed to take place on the morrow morn in a meadow which was situated on the farther side of the garden.

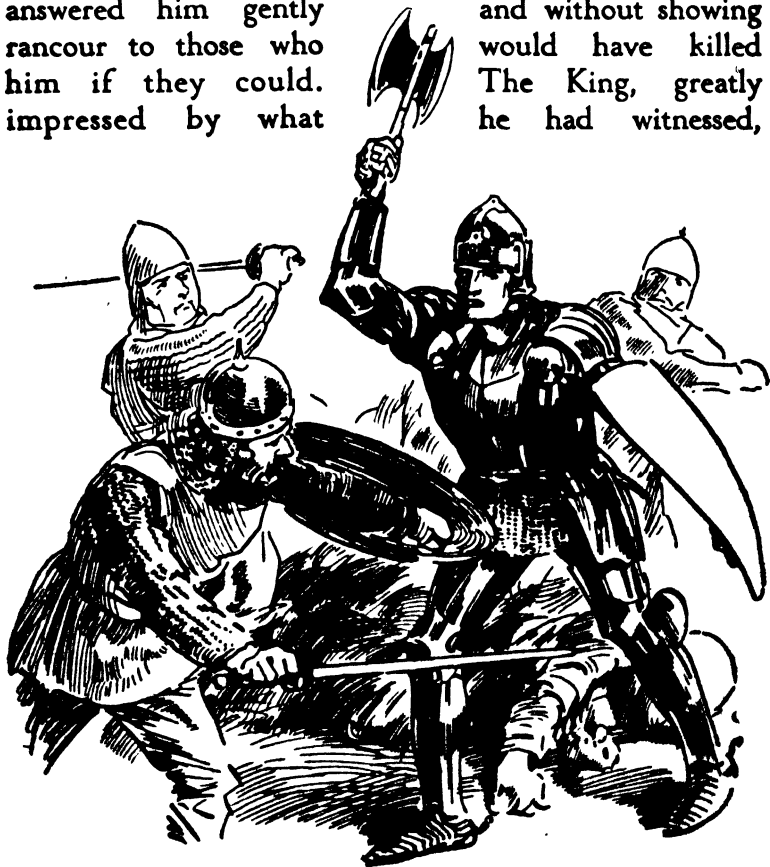
As the day was already far advanced the whole company retired to the castle for rest and refreshment. The Scottish knight was lodged on the east side of the building, which was isolated from the rest of the apartments and the great hall where the collation was spread for the others. He spent the night in vigil and prayer for conquest and victory in the good Cause. Upon his shield he scratched the legend, "This day a Martyr or a Conqueror," and when the morning's beauty had chased away the darkness from the sky, he was the first to arrive at the meadow, and there he awaited the herald's summons without trepidation. His heart was uplifted by religious fervour, and the light of his Faith shone in his eyes.

The King with all his company was present to behold the combat, which commenced by an engagement between St. Andrew and a knight in bright armour, mounted on a horse white as the northern snow, and trapped with azure/blue. A sharp encounter took place; but the Thracian had the foil and was obliged to retire, which he did with an ill grace. The next knight was likewise speedily repulsed by St. Andrew, and a third suffered a similar fate. The fourth opponent was considered by the Thracians to be the strongest and most accomplished of their knights, and his exploits had elevated him into a national hero. The onlookers felt certain he would make short work of the Scottish Champion, and applauded him loudly when he rode into the list, looking very stalwart and proud. In the first

encounter the lances of both fighters were shivered to pieces by the violence of the blows, and fragments were hurled into the air. They alighted from their horses and attacked with their falchions, with a fierceness that sent sparks flying from their armour as from a hammer and an iron anvil. However, the struggle did not endure long, nor was the result uncertain, for a mighty thwack on the Thracian's burgonet sent him spinning, and he fell to the ground unconscious and well-nigh dead.

The discomfiture of their hero by the interfering stranger, who had sprung this surprise upon them, aroused the ire of the Thracian noblemen, and, as with one accord, a company of them broke into the lists and surrounded St. Andrew with murderous intent. At a glance the Scottish Champion recognised that he was the victim of treachery, and determined to defend himself to the death. With his curtalaxe on high he dashed at his foes, and so valiantly and dexterously did he deport himself in this strait, that his attackers fell like ripened corn before the sickle. The King, who at first had looked on in helpless amazement at this base infringement of the laws of hospitality and fair play by his subjects, now hastily summoned his armed guards, and commanded them to restore order and protect his guest. After a struggle they succeeded in forming a wall between St. Andrew and his angry assaulters, and the Champion, bleeding profusely from many wounds, but still undaunted, was conducted in safety to his quarters in the castle.

There was much work to do tending the wounded and burying the slain; but his Majesty saw that his guest had first and best attention, for he was heart-broken to feel that the honour of his country had been tarnished. He lost no time in making his apologies, and St. Andrew answered him gently and without showing rancour to those who would have killed him if they could. The King, greatly impressed by what he had witnessed,



kissed the Champion's sword, and swore that he would become a true Christian, for he felt sure it was Divine protection St. Andrew had received that day. The conversion of their ruler caused great commotion amongst his courtiers, and many of them professed their desire to follow his wise lead.

Although so weak from loss of blood that he could scarce stand, St. Andrew taught his religion in words of such eloquence to his eager listeners that he held them spellbound. Of those who had come in wrath many stayed to hear, and the rest departed with feelings of kindness and goodwill. At the conclusion of the meeting, St. Andrew and the King, engaged in deep conversation, turned into the garden. A great cry suddenly came from the royal lips, for the six snow-white swans with their golden crowns no longer swam upon the clear waters of the pond, but on the brink stood six sweet, golden-haired young girls, clustered together like a bunch of wild roses. With a cry of joy they rushed to the King their father, and almost smothered him with the vehemence of their embraces. They could not explain how the transformation to their natural selves had come about; but it had happened at the moment when their father had offered up his first heartfelt prayer to Heaven. It was a joyful party that assembled in the giant's great hall that night to join in the feast that had been hastily prepared to celebrate the great event.

A few days after they had all returned to Thrace St. Andrew took a loving farewell of his new-found friends,

and rode hot-foot in the hope of overtaking his brothers at arms St. Anthony of Italy.

On the very first day of his journey he was led into difficulties by his own kindness and chivalry, for he was decoyed into the depths of a forest by a maiden who pretended to be in distress, but who was in reality the accomplice of a band of robbers. These villains took from him all his arms and money, and then, throwing him upon his horse, whipped the animal so that it broke into a wild and aimless gallop. After long wanderings St. Andrew reached a wayside hut, where he begged for food and shelter. His host, a kindly woodman, not only entertained him; but at daybreak hastened into Thrace to inform the King of St. Andrew's plight. His Majesty, much disturbed at the news, commanded an escort to be got ready with all necessary equipment for the stranded Champion, and carrying a bag of gold himself, they set out at once for the shepherd's hut.

"Father, dear, take us with you, do take us with you," coaxed the six Princesses when they came to the palace gate to see the expedition start. "We shall be so miserable if you leave us at home," they cried, and the good old King was not proof against their sweet pleading. So the six maidens on six ambling ponies were added to the cortège that rode post-haste to the aid of Scotland's Champion.

St. Andrew, greatly touched by His Majesty's kindness, felt loth to part from so true a friend, and persuaded him to bear him company to Athens, where he

would not only have good entertainment and witness the great tournament, but would also be able to enjoy the society of his eldest daughter Rosalinde.

The old King was delighted at the idea, and instructed his attendants to go back and make all necessary preparations and follow after him.

"Let us go too, dear father," begged the Swan Princesses all at the same time and then each one separately, but their father was obdurate.

"You must return home with the escort," said he, "and attend to your studies that have been sadly neglected of late, if I may except the art of swimming, which has taken up more than its due share of your time."

Neither tears nor entreaties would shake his resolution, and kissing them fondly, he bade his attendants guard them carefully and sent them on their homeward way. The King and St. Andrew rode together in the opposite direction, without any misgiving in regard to the safety of the little party, for the distance was short and the road secure, but that "the best-laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a'gley" will be shown in the next chapter.

ST. PATRICK OF IRELAND

THE six Swan Princesses were greatly upset; indeed, they regarded themselves as being very ill-used. "Father might have allowed us to go to Athens with him," they

confided one to another; "just think of all the wonderful sights we should have seen!"

"Rosalinde isn't much older than I am," complained Dulcinea, the second eldest; "I'm nearly sixteen anyway; but I have to stay at home and do lessons, and she is able to be there and join in all the pleasures."

"Oh! I do wish we could have gone," came the chorus. Then a naughty thought, that would not be gainsaid, crept into the head of the third Princess. She whispered eagerly, and sowed the seed of disobedience in the receptive minds of her sisters.

The afternoon sun being at its height, a halt was called for rest beneath a tree at the edge of the wood that had been the scene of St. Andrew's experience with the robbers. The attendants withdrew to a respectful distance, and regaled themselves with even more enjoyment than their charges. As soon as the former were out of earshot the Princesses began discussing their plans.

"We can take a short cut through the wood," said Rosana the temptress, "and join father at the Castle on the Hill, where he said he and St. Andrew would spend the night. He surely won't send us back home from there."

"Are you sure of the way? It would be dreadful if we got lost," interrupted Dulcinea.

"Oh! it is quite simple when one has a sense of direction," her sister assured her in superior tones.

"Well, then, don't talk about it all day; let us be off whilst the guards are occupied with their meal," advised one of the girls.

The ponies were quietly untethered and mounted and the Princesses well concealed in the wood before the guards became aware of their flight. Even then much time was lost before they went in pursuit, as they imagined it to be one of the usual pranks of their little ladies, and expected each moment that they would come out of some hiding-place near by.

The Princesses, led by Rosana, made good pace, but instead of reaching the highway at the point they expected, they found themselves penetrating farther and farther into the wood. Upon coming to a small clearing they dismounted to hold counsel together, and a somewhat heated discussion took place. Dulcinea, being by this time thoroughly alarmed, suggested that they should retrace their steps, for she bitterly regretted their foolish escapade. This met with a storm of disapproval, but the quarrel was cut short by a great trampling and hallooing quite close to them. In a moment they were surrounded by a party of hideous satyrs, who, full of goatish mischief, leapt about the frightened children, crying, "Come, dance with us, my pretty little dears." Observing their shrinking terror the satyrs laughed loudly, and seized the Princesses by their hair. "We'll make you dance, we'll make you sing," they cried mockingly, whilst dragging their victims up and down on the rough ground.

Now, by good chance, St. Patrick of Ireland happened at this time to be making his way in that very part of the wood, for he too was bent upon reaching Athens,

after having delivered the Island of Rhodes from the Turks by his prowess in fight and wisdom in council. He was following a woodland path to save a lengthier route by road when he heard shrieks and cries of fear, and hastened to learn the cause of the turmoil. The woeful sight that met his eyes struck him with amazement. Being a man of quick wit he soon grasped the situation, and with a loud shout fell upon the satyrs, raining blows upon them with the handle of his sword. The satyrs, as cowardly as they were wicked, relinquished their hold upon their victims and fled away as fast as they could. St. Patrick, the kindest of men, picked up the unfortunate Princesses, who were huddled on the ground too much frightened to move.

"Now, there's a mess!" said he, wiping the blood from their scratched hands and faces; "but no bones are broken, and you are quite safe now, only the nice frocks are all quite spoilt!" Thus soothingly he talked to them till some measure of calmness was restored.

"Now, what are all you pretty young ladies doing alone in this sinful place?" he demanded, and could not well have put a more inconvenient question, for to answer the culprits were obliged to confess the story of their disobedience and its consequences.

"Sure now," reprimanded St. Patrick, "and 'tis naughty children you are; but you have been punished, and the best thing we can do is to get through the wood and try to find the King of Thrace and my good friend St. Andrew of Scotland."



exhibited
at the
draggled,

After some difficulty he collected the ponies, that had wandered off into the brushwood, and mounted the Princesses one after another. They soon reached the highway under the guidance of St. Patrick, and proceeded in the direction of the Castle on the Hill.

They reached their destination by sundown shortly after the King of Thrace and St. Andrew, who great astonishment approach of the bedishevelled cavalcade.

It was only after lengthy entreaty on the part of good-natured St. Patrick that the culprits were forgiven by their father, who then gave way upon further persuasion to permitting his daughters to continue the journey to Athens that they had begun with such misfortunes. The indulgent monarch arranged that they should follow later under suitable

escort, and many were his injunctions as to their good behaviour.

When the King, accompanied by the two Champions, rode off next morning, they were watched from the ramparts by the owners of six golden heads, who declared in unison that never since the beginning of the world had there been another so great and splendid as dear, good St. Patrick, the Champion of Ireland.

THE GREAT TOURNAMENT

WHEN the Seven Champions of Christendom met together at Athens, they spent long hours in converse and the relation of their exploits that had concluded so fortunately for them all, while Sabra, Eglantine, Celestine, Rosalinde and the Swan Princesses soon became fast friends.

The King of Greece determined that the splendour of his wedding should be unsurpassed in the annals of history. The tournament lasted a fortnight, the first week being devoted to mixed events, games of skill and tilting, and the second set apart for the Seven Champions. On each of seven days one of them stood against all comers, in single combat, from dawn to dusk.

The proudest and bravest heathen knights accepted the challenge, most of them well-known champions in the countries whence they hailed, or of even wider

fame. But though there was many a long and close fought struggle, and many a fierce fight, in all cases the Christian champions at last proved victorious, gaining honour for themselves and their countries and glory for Christendom.

Upon the seventh and last day St. George performed such wonderful feats of courage and strength that all were amazed, and the plaudits were long and loud. The King, descending from his seat, congratulated the Champion, and desired him to return with him to the palace to receive the honours due to a knight of such merit; for he had that day defeated five hundred of the hardiest knights in Asia.

Great were the joy and pride of Sabra when she welcomed her victorious hero back to his tent. Thus the great tournament was brilliantly concluded, and in acknowledgment of the victory of the Seven Champions the King of Greece presented them with a golden tree bearing seven branches with fruits made of precious stones.

The Champions now returned to their respective countries to enjoy a period of peaceful happiness. Then once more the call of duty summoned them to assemble in Eastern Asia. War fierce and terrible waged between the heathen nations and their Christian neighbours, and St. George as the Commander-in-Chief of the Legions of the Cross led his soldiers through all difficulties to victory.

He himself had the satisfaction of slaying his ancient foe Almidor in single combat within the walls of Tripoli;

but in the midst of the rejoicings over this event a messenger arrived whose appearance betrayed the haste with which he had ridden.

“Oh, gracious St. George,” he cried, “fly to England
and delay not, for if
you be not at Coventry
to rescue her by New
Year’s day,
the Lady



Sabra will be burnt at the stake on a false charge of witchcraft."

Appointing his brother Champions to lead the Legions, St. George sprang to horse and rode at his best and speeded across the many tedious miles of sea and land that lay between him and Coventry.

ST. GEORGE TO THE RESCUE

THE journey was long and wearisome, and before it ended St. George had heard all the details of Princess Sabra's woeful story many times over. It appeared from the messenger's narrative that after St. George's departure from England Princess Sabra lived in the strictest seclusion, seldom leaving the precincts of the castle except to visit the poor or to cheer the sick.

Her charity and kindness soon won the hearts of her humble neighbours, though at first they had been prejudiced against her on account of her being a foreigner.

There was much poverty and misery in the town, for the people were cruelly oppressed by their landlord, the Earl of Coventry, one of the most powerful nobles in England. He was beset by pride, and possessed a harsh, vindictive nature, so that it boded ill for those who offended him. Before long Princess Sabra's work amongst the needy attracted his attention, for frequently she had succeeded in thwarting his ill-natured plans

to injure some hapless tenant who chanced to provoke his displeasure. At first he regarded her efforts with disdain, but finding her beautiful and charming, he endeavoured to ingratiate himself with her.

He was annoyed to find that his advances met with a cold reception, and he gradually grew actively to dislike the "interfering foreigner," as he termed her. It was the first step towards the open quarrel that presently ensued.

It befell one day that the Earl, accompanied by his usual train of sycophants, passed through a quarter of the town where the Princess was engaged in an errand of mercy. A little girl in turning the corner into a narrow and dirty lane had the misfortune to stumble against the Earl, causing him to soil his shoe in the mire of the kennel.

Without a word he seized the unhappy child by the hair and beat her unmercifully with his cane. Sabra, in a cottage close by, hearing the screams of fear and pain, ran outside and, regardless of the stinging blows, snatched the girl from his grasp.

"Base coward!" she cried, her bosom heaving and her eyes flashing with anger; "were St. George here now, he would kill you like a dog for this cruelty to a helpless child," and holding the bleeding little body to her breast, she reentered the cottage.

This encounter greatly amazed the Earl and, seeing a covert smile on his followers' faces at the open scorn with which the lady had treated him, he swore aloud to have revenge for her insult.

To one so powerful the means to do ill were always at hand, and by threats and bribery he could secure ready service from the menials whose very lives depended upon his good pleasure. In this secret way he sowed the seeds of mistrust against the "Egyptian" amongst her pensioners, and then he obtained a hold over her porter who carried the food and medicines she distributed in charity. These latter were often mixed with poison or harmful drugs at the Earl's instigation and naturally, to the poor who received them, brought sickness or death. This wicked conspiracy was planned so cleverly, that Sabra had no idea of the connection between her gifts and the outbreak of serious illness. Meanwhile suspicion lurked in the sufferers' minds, that had been as cruelly poisoned as their bodies.

Several times when the Princess had paid a visit to some cottage, almost immediately after her departure a mysterious fire broke out, and once a whole neighbourhood was ravaged before the flames could be quenched. Then whispers of the Princess' evil eye spread into common gossip of the dangers that followed her services. To crown the other misfortunes, the child she had rescued died of the wounds inflicted by the Earl, which had mortified from dirt and neglect.

"See," murmured the gossips, forgetting all the kindness and benefits with which the Princess had loaded them—"see, the child she touched has died; she must be a witch."

This tale, bandied from one mouth to another, lost

nothing in the telling, and soon the whole town was seething with the report "that the Egyptian Princess was a witch who practised the black arts, and had caused the death of dozens of people."

This malicious talk now reached the ears of the Governor of Coventry, who, upon his mentioning it to the Earl, was advised to arrest the Princess on the charge of practising witchcraft.

This Governor held his position by the Earl's favour, and was anxious to please his master, so that Sabra had little chance of either justice or mercy in that quarter when her case was tried before him. Thus the Princess Sabra, heiress to the throne of Egypt, and consort of St. George, the hero whom all England worshipped, was condemned to be burnt as a witch in Coventry market-place.

Incited by the Earl, the Governor arranged to carry out the sentence without delay; but by chance the King rode into Coventry that day, and heard a lying story of the whole affair from the Earl. Upon learning that the lady was of royal birth, he insisted upon her being given the benefit of a trial by combat, to which her rank entitled her.

"I grant her this mercy," said the King, "that if a knight be found before the first day of the New Year to defend her cause by mortal combat and he be so fortunate as to overcome the challenger, her innocence will be proved, and her life spared."

Meanwhile the Princess was to be held a close prisoner, and the Earl, who had immediately offered himself as

the challenger, took good care that she had no communication with the world outside.

Her grief-stricken attendants, however, who dearly loved their gentle mistress, waited no orders from her, but at once dispatched a messenger to St. George with the true version of the affair to relate to him, for it was known to many, who feared the Earl's vengeance too greatly to attempt her defence.

The messenger rode hard, but the journey was long and the time short. St. George on his homeward journey rode harder still, scarce stopping till good old Bayard could do no more. A storm in the English Channel caused a final delay, after many other difficulties of the journey had been overcome. When at length the knight was once more upon the soil of his native land, he rode for dear life into Coventry on the morning of the first day of the year. His heart beat fast with panic when he perceived the crowds hurrying to the market-place, which from time immemorial had been the scene of burnings for witchcraft, tortures, and similar punishments.

"Merciful God," he prayed as he galloped along, "grant that I be not too late to save that innocent life."

The Governor and notabilities had assembled in state close to the spot where the fatal pile stood ready for the torch. The trumpets sounded, according to custom, to summon the challenger, whereupon the Earl of Coventry rode proudly into the market-place upon a roan steed trapped with rich trappings of gold and

precious stones of great price. He advanced up and down with an air of being ready to encounter a hundred knights; but with no expectation of having, in reality, to meet with anyone, for he knew the Princess to be a stranger in a strange land, and thought her husband far away.

Then the trumpets sounded again, this time to summon the defendant, if any there were to defend her cause. They were sounded three several times up and down the fields with a quarter of an hour's interval between; but no defendant appeared, so the governor commanded the guards to bring the Princess and set fire to the pile.

Sabra advanced quietly and without tremor between her guards, for she felt secure in her innocence, and had humbly committed her soul to the safe keeping of God.

As she approached the Governor to make a last obeisance, for he was the representative of the power and majesty of the King, there was an excited stir amongst the crowd of onlookers. Those on the outermost fringe had observed a flying horseman with waving banner approaching across the fields.

"Hold! Hold! a Champion comes!" they shouted, as all necks craned eagerly in the direction, for the thought of a fight to the death between the Earl and the advancing stranger filled them with delighted expectation.

The Governor, hearing the cry, ordered the trumpets to sound the challenge once again, and the people gave a ringing cheer. Hearing this, St. George's courage rose high, and he slackened rein to give Bayard breathing space, for it told him that he had not come too late.

With a long look of love and pity at the intrepid figure of his wife standing in the biting wintry wind, he stood to attention, awaiting the signal for the opening of the combat.

He prayed, as he had never prayed before, for strength to save his beloved wife; and at the blare of the trumpets the two knights set spurs to their horses and galloped so furiously together, that at the first shock of the encounter both were unhorsed.

St. George leapt to his feet with his customary agility; but the Earl, who was out of condition through sumptuous living, rose with difficulty, for he was badly bruised, and blood streamed through his visor. He paused a moment breathing heavily, and then drew out a large falchion and ran at St. George with an angry gesture. The latter parried the blow with his shield, which bore the mark of its violence in a dent that no amount of repair would ever obliterate. Remembering what was at stake, St. George gave his return blow with such superhuman strength that his antagonist was almost cleft in twain, and the proud Earl of Coventry lay dead in the mire of the market-place.

The Governor immediately delivered Sabra from her guards, and with his own hands conducted her to St. George, who removed his helmet to greet her the better.

At the sight of that noble countenance and the waving golden hair the crowd recognised their hero, and shouted lustily, "'Tis St. George! St. George of England! Hurrah for St. George and Princess Sabra!"

St. George acknowledged this outburst with a frigid salute, for his anger against the turncoat who had thought holiday at the of their bene-

was high
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dying agonies. Lifting Sabra, who had recognised both Bayard and his rider at the first glance, before him on his horse, he turned from the scene of his triumph, unheeding of aught save that precious burden encompassed by his arm.

This matter concluded and Sabra secure in the charge of her deeply repentant townsfolk, St. George returned to his military duties. When the enemy was subdued and many of the people converted to Christianity, the armies were disbanded and the Seven Champions returned to their homes. In earnest endeavour they devoted their lives to the service of those who needed aid, in accordance with the vows of their Brotherhood, and found lasting happiness in the pursuit of duty.



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